



April 16, 2009

## Thoughts and prayers

Greetings friends and neighbors,

As you all know, an event of unprecedented tragedy took place just outside of Graham, in our district. A 34-year-old father of five, apparently upset that his wife was leaving him, shot and killed his five children in their home before turning the gun on himself.

**My heart goes out to the family and friends of these young victims, and my thoughts and prayers are with them and with all the people in our district who are grieving.** While everyone is still trying to come to grips with the depth of this horrendous crime, I think it's important to remember these children, and try to focus on how special they really were.

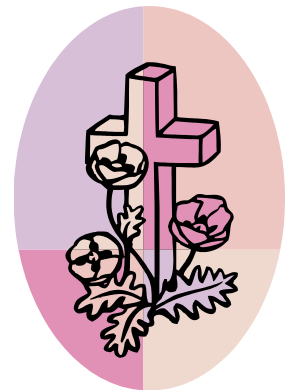
The youngest boy, **James**, was described as being full of life and spirit...and apparently was also quite a handful. Like most seven-year-old boys, he liked to play video games and fish for trout in our local lakes and streams.

**Heather** was the nine-year-old. Neighbors say she was a chatterbox who loved to read, frequently asking anyone nearby if she could read to them.

12-year-old **Samantha** was the middle child. She had long, blond hair, and while she kept mostly to herself...she did have a few friends and got along well with others. Samantha was the only one of her siblings who fought her father before she was murdered. The other four children were shot in their own beds.

Samantha's older sister, **Jamie**, apparently enjoyed being social and talking to people. At 14, she was becoming quite the volleyball player.

**Maxine** was the oldest daughter. The 16-year-old has just learned to drive, and was enjoying cruising around in the old Ford Mustang her parents bought her. She helped her



mother take care of the kids, and liked spending time at the Orting Library along with her siblings.

To remember these five wonderful children, who because of the selfish act of one man will never grow up to reach their full potentials, I asked for a moment of silence in the Senate chambers to honor their memory. My thoughts and prayers remain with their family and friends, and thanks to all the senators who paid their respects to these children!

I've been talking with representatives from the state Department of Social and Health Services to see if **we can work together to find ways to prevent future tragedies like this one and get people the help they need before a situation becomes critical.**

### Floor action continues

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It's interesting how business is conducted in the Senate chambers. As I've said before, we're given a list of bills chosen mostly by the majority party to be brought to a vote. The list is usually given to us at the last minute, and I have to learn what each bill does literally minutes before voting yes or no.

So far, we've had mostly innocuous bills come to the floor. Most of them aren't very hard to figure out as they help people or improve public safety and so forth. However one bill we debated on Friday, [House Bill 1402](#), was rather controversial. It changes how the [Department of Labor and Industries](#) handles communication once a claim is resolved. **If a claimant isn't satisfied after his or her claim is closed or denied, they have the ability to file an appeal. Employers have always been able to talk to the doctors and patient (employee) involved to get to the bottom of the issue in a friendly, workable fashion.**

Under [HB 1402](#), employers will no longer be granted that ability.

This process has worked for both employers and employees since the program began in 1917. Proponents of the measure tried to turn it into a privacy issue by claiming that doctors might be persuaded to change their opinions or share information beyond that relating to the claim. That's simply not true.

As a former health care professional, I can attest that there are both federal and state laws that already protect the privacy of individuals. Doctors are obligated to document every patient encounter (visit or phone call), be it with the patient themselves, a patient's family member or

their employer (for a Labor and Industries claim). If a doctor changes his or her treatment plan per any encounter, the doctor is required to document it so there is a written record.

**Despite the fact that the bill increases state spending by millions of dollars,** the majority in the Senate pushed the bill through 29-18 on a mostly party-line vote. I think this is a really bad bill for the state of Washington.

### 13 days to go, and still no operating budget debate



There haven't been any major changes to the transportation budget since its proposal, and it's now awaiting a vote by the [House of Representatives](#). They've passed their own version of the transportation budget, and we're now at work finding compromises between the two until we can pass the same budget from both houses.

In the [Senate transportation budget](#), Pierce County has done very well when it comes to funding for transportation projects. The [Second District](#) has received funding for a few things as well, so I'm tickled at what we might receive from the Senate version.

[The House version](#), however, is not as generous toward the Second district. I'll be working with the chair and ranking minority member of the [House Transportation Committee](#) to see if I can protect what's been allotted to our area in the Senate budget.

The story is similar with the [capital budget](#). It's been passed by the [Senate](#) and is now being considered by the House. They have [their own version](#) and will send it to us. Then a committee will be formed to iron out the details and the same budget will pass both bodies.

Now we come to the budget that everyone seems to be talking about, but apparently nobody wants to debate. The [Senate operating budget](#) was finally released a few weeks ago, but here we are with less than two weeks in the 2009 legislative session and it still hasn't been brought to the floor for debate. What is the majority party waiting for?

The [Senate Republican Caucus](#) has been debating the budget since it came out and we've found many things to discuss with the budget writers once they bring it to the floor. But they've given us no clue as to when that might happen. The state constitution requires that the Legislature pass a balanced budget before adjourning the session, so it'll have to come up for a vote soon. I'm looking forward to hearing the debate, whenever it finally happens.

As the ranking Republican on the [Senate Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee](#), I'm bothered by the proposal to allow the state's colleges and universities to break the promise to state residents of capping tuition increases at 7%. Some in the majority party, including the governor, want to allow 14% increases in tuition to help make up for some of the cuts that budget writers want to make to higher education. **I believe there are other ways to make up this budget shortfall.** The state's working families, many of whom make too much to qualify for financial aid but not enough to pay for four years of college for their children, shouldn't have to shoulder the burden of poor fiscal decisions made by the majority party in state government.



### No more taxes!



Yesterday was April 15<sup>th</sup>, the day federal taxes are due. It was also the day more than 5,000 people (many from our district! Hallelujah!) gathered here in Olympia to send a message to the majority party that we don't want new taxes to make up for their overspending. When I looked out at the crowd, I saw signs from Orting, Graham and other places in the 2<sup>nd</sup> District, and I got the opportunity to meet many of you who came up to introduce yourselves!

The message I heard loud and clear yesterday was that regardless of party affiliation, people don't want to pay any more taxes. When I'm out in the community, it's the message I hear most often. People want to know what the state is going to do about taxes. Well I can tell you that I'm doing what I can here in Olympia to protect you from the majority party's proposed tax increases. In fact, I signed on to [Senate Joint Memorial 8016](#), which calls for reduced taxes among other things. I know it's your priority to keep taxes low, and I'll continue working toward that goal.

### In closing...

If you'd like to share your concerns with me or ask me a question, please feel free to send me an e-mail to [becker.randi@leg.wa.gov](mailto:becker.randi@leg.wa.gov). You can also visit my legislative website at [www.SenateRepublicans.wa.gov/Becker](http://www.SenateRepublicans.wa.gov/Becker), where you'll find a link to my [sponsored bills](#) where you can keep track of what I'm doing. **And please consider forwarding this e-mail to anyone**

**you think might be interested in receiving it. Ask them to contact me so I can add them to my distribution list.**

I look forward to your comments and suggestions on these issues or anything else coming before the Legislature. My office phone number is (360) 786-7602, or you can write me at 115B Irv Newhouse Building, Olympia, WA 98504. Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving you in the Washington State Senate. It is truly an honor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randi Becker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Randi Becker  
2nd District State Senator

